ML BULLETIN
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of the United States and Canada
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HALLELUJAH NOTE

The millenium has arrived! Our editiorial prodding paid off handsomely, and we are delighted to be able to offer you in this issue some excellent contributions from Society members. Now that they've set the pace, we hope to receive material from the other 40 or so of you have not yet been featured in the Bulletin. What's your pet magic lantern topic? Your fellow members are waiting to hear (250-500 words, please).

TRAVELS WITH A LANTERN

> Fancy having to carry your lantern, slides, screen, etc., on your back for nearly a mile with sand almost up to your knees, or else having to pay a high price for a carrier, when one is on his way to help a struggling church or mission of an evening after a day's work. (Western Australia)
>
> Do not be out after 10 p.m. Do not carry bags through London streets.
>
> Optical Magic Lantern Journal
> London, 1890's

There can be no doubt about it. The travelling lanternist must have had an exhausting time of it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One has only to look at the grim faces of the showmen, trudging from one poorly paid entertainment to another, in the lithographs of Daumier and Gavarni. They scarcely had breath left to shout "Galante Show" under someone's window. What a marvelous relief it must have been to be invited in, to unshoulder the lantern and (hopefully) be revived in the kitchen. If you travelled with a small boy, a marmoset and a hurdy-gurdy, you could always load everything on the boy, but this might have cut into your profits.

With limelight and larger audiences, our friend's problems must have been compounded. Think of the sheer awkwardness and variety of the equipment, and the possibility of being stopped and searched by the police after a late performance. But at least there were trains for the longer journeys, and trains had baggage vans, and there were porters and carriers with capacious carts.

The few of us surviving today who travel long distances with a biunial lantern can readily sympathize with these earlier performers. While we have

no gas bags or collapsible screens, the modern aircraft - to some oversight - has not been designed with the biunial in mind. Can we really entrust our precious apparatus to a moving belt which apparently scrambles suitcases like eggs? Try taking it aboard the plane; the seats are too low, the closets are too small or non-existent, the toilets are needed, and (as someone will gaily tell you) you can't put the lantern under your knees because it will fly around if the pilot stops too suddenly.

These fascinating problems are yours, however, only if you get the biunial past the security check in the first place. The appearance of its skeleton (a double-barrelled engine of destruction) on the X-ray screen is likely to bring security forces running from all directions. You must remember not to joke about the situation (the United States Government forbids this) and unpack the lantern - all the way - with good grace. Customs officers are more sympathetic, though very attentive to the lens barrels. I suggest you smuggle perfume in the dissolving tap.

If nineteenth century travellers with the lantern can teach us little else but forebearance, their manuals are full of eccentric - and often useful - information. I'm sure we all want to know "How to Get, Hold, and Please an Audience" and where not to shown nude statuary. I shall be pleased to share some of their throughts and mine on these and other subjects if the editor is kind enough to invite me back. Do you know how to turn up the volume of a lady accompanist, whose fright at performing has driven her to the gin bottle, and can only tinkle the keys like a little mouse? And have any of you had the opportunity of showing "Pussy's Road to Ruin" to the inmates of a State Prison? Perhaps this was not the wisest choice, but it was very well received.

Bombastes Duplex

Editor's Note: We almost hate to blow the cover of anyone with such a marvelous nom de plume, but we thought you'd want to know that the wry M. Duplex also functions as Director of the Sterling and Francine Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, under the name of David Brooke. Taking his key from the late, great Bombastes Triplex, who wrote for the British Magic Lantern Journal in the 1890's, David has, as he put it, "affectionately mixed history and present experience" gleaned from his own show-giving trips. A member who has seen his show tells us it was a joyous occasion. David has promised us additional tidbits for future issues, which we await with delight.

THE MAGIC LANTERN SLIDE SET TO MUSIC--THE ILLUSTRATED SONG

Sound had been no stranger to magic lantern shows before 1885; but, at that time in New York City, an audio-visual innovation was introduced. A new tearjerker-ballad by the young song-writing-publishing team Stern & Marks was presented at the Grand Opera House on Twentythird Street and Eighth Avenue by one of America's leading minstrel companies. The ballad, The Little Lost Child: or, The Passing Policeman, told in two verses and repeated refrains the poignant tale of a man in blue who finds a lost child and recognizes in her, and in the mother, his own long-lost wife and babe. When the company's lead singer, Allen May, performed the song, the lyrics were illustrated line by line with a series of photographic magic lantern slides projected upon a stage screen. This song became a big hit; soon all the major music publishers were jumping on the slide bandwagon.

The idea of using slides with music was not new: many a temperance song or evening hymn had been accompanied by artists' renderings. But photographic illustrations with live models posed in scenes to illustrate a song's story - these were a novelty!

Just as radio and television today function as major song-plugging devices, around the turn of the century the illustrated song became the great promotional device for music publishers. Publishing houses commissioned photographic firms such as Scott & Van Altena (N.Y.), DeWitt C. Wheeler (N.Y.), and the Chicago Transparency Company (Chicago) to produce sets of from fourteen to eighteen slides. From 4 x 5-inch glass plate negatives, 3 1/4 x 4-inch positives were made by a reduction-projection process. The black-and-which slides were then tinted by hand -- a guide set by a master colorist and the rest by girls on a piece-work basis. A minimum order was usually fifty sets, for which the publisher paid three to five dollars per set. At first, slides were distributed by the publishers and their pluggers, but--as the novelty caught on--distribution was handled by film and slide exchanges at rental rates of one to two dollars a week. Sometimes film exchanges threw in the slides free of charge with a moving-picture rental.

Around 1905-06, "Nickelodeon" movie houses--often nothing more than stores or halls with a white sheet or plain wall as a screen--began to spring up all across the country. In them, in addition to serving as entertainment, the illustrated songs satisfied a technical need. Nickelodeon mangers equipped with but a single projector welcomed them as easy, inexpensive fillers for that uncomfortably-long "One Moment, Please, While the Operator Changes Reels."

The better performers traveled with their own projectionists, to insure a minimum of inverted images, fumbled slides, or other disasters. The "lanternist" of such acts usually received billing equal to the vocalist's--and justifiably so. Synchronization of the glass slides with the singer's presentation was a very difficult feat, even with good cue sheets.

It was the singer who was called the "illustrator." He or she warbled through the first verse and chorus, each line coordinated with a colorful illustration. On the second time around, a slide urged the audience, "All Join In the Chorus!" and this was where the song-plugger really earned his wage. A slide with the printed words of the chorus would appear, and - if the singer were successful in leading the sing-along--the theater patrons would, theoretically, all rush to their local sheet music dealers to purchase copies.

Advertising blurbs on sheet music covers inevitably boasted of the song being introduced with "immense success" by the public's favorite song illustrators--often billed as teams, such as Maxwell & Simpson, the Silvers, and Bennett & Rich. Lantern slide "tie-ins" also contributed to sheet music "packaging." Single inset pictures or whole sets of song-slide illustrations were reproduced on the front or back covers or on an inside page. Similarly, sets of song-slide illustrations were issued in postcard "song-series"--often in full color.

Among the most beautiful slides extant are those which were known in the trade as "effect slides." Painted backdrops had been the usual solution to the problem of illustrating out-of-season until Scott & Van Altena brought the composite negative to the song-slide business. Their large collection of negatives of scenic locations enabled them to create "June-moon-spoon" scenes

in wintertime and snow scenes in July. Models posed before a black velvet backdrop; a negative of an appropriate background scene was chosen and unwanted areas were stripped away. Sometimes as many as four glass-plate negatives were superimposed to produce the 3 1/4 x 4-inch lantern slides. These special slides were extremely popular with audiences and with reviewers, who often commented enthusiastically upon the novelties in the trade papers.

By 1915 the illustrated song was on the decline, edged out by the same advancing technological forces which had created it and its place in American life. The development of longer and better movies and the outfitting of theaters with two projectors eliminated the need for illustrated songs between reels. With increased popularity of the phonograph, people abandoned their parlor pianos and, as a result, sheet music sales declined. Music styles were changing, too: a new dance craze swept the country, songs which told a story became "old hat," and the new tunes had tempos too fast for slides. By the time of the First World War, the live-model illustrated song had about run its course, although some use of art slides with organ music continued into the Twenties.

NANCY A. BERGH

Editor's Note: Nancy and her sister Margaret are university students who first encountered live-model illustrated song slides through the one-man shows of Max Morath. Morath steered them to John W. Ripley of Topeka, Kansas, a leading authority on the illustrated song, who became, Nancy says, "a close friend and generous mentor." She suggests Ripley's article, "All Join in the Chorus," American Heritage, June 1959, as recommended reading. Nancy's current research is focussed on New York slidemakers John Scott and Edward Van Altena, while Margaret is especially interested in music and musical activities relating to the American role in World War I. The Berghs will welcome any information pertaining to these topics.

CAN YOU TELL ME?--QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT MAGIC LANTERNS

Q: I have a magic lantern with a trademark that has the initials J.S., a 6-pointed star and a winged insignia. The paper lable on the case says "Magic Lantern" in three languages. I can remember my grandfather showing this lantern to me over 50 years ago and think it probably dates back to the 1890's. Your comments will be appreciated. Blair M. Stitt, 649 Iliana St., Kailua, HI 96734.

A. Your estimate of the date is approximately correct. The insignia and initials you describe probably indicate that your lantern was made by Jean Schoenner of Nuremberg, Germany. Most late 19th century "toy" lanterns were imported from Nuremberg, which had been a major toy-making center for several centuries. Most of the makers put their initials and identifying marks on the boxes and some, such as Ernst Plank (E.P.), identified themselves on the lanterns as well. The full history of these makers is difficult to obtain, as many company records were destroyed by fire during World War II.

Q: How does one date pre-photographic magic lantern slides? One of our members is particularly interested in very early slides from the 17th and 18th centuries. Rolf Eipper, Box 66076, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, V5N5L4.

A: The chances of finding 17th century slides are extremely remote, but some late 18th and a good many early 19th century ones are probably still to be found, especially in Europe. Date identification without resorting to chemical analysis of paints, etc. must rest primarily upon the art techniques and styles used. Early French and English slides were handpainted, usually with very transparent colors, sometimes outlined in black. Some have paper borders, some wooden. The art styles range from primitive to very delicate and sophisticated. The French slides, especially those dealing with fairy tales, often have ballooned copy as our comic strips do. The art style and the color of early English slides tend to be stronger than in the French slides. After the middle of the 19th century, the German ones for "toy" lanterns, had pictures applied by a sort of decal process. The colors are very rich, and they are less transparent than the earlier slides. Some have superior artwork, while others are clumsy and amateurish. The art quality deteriorated as increased demand led to mass production of cheap copies. The style of costumes and furnishings is another good dating clue when the scenes represent everyday life, but it can be misleading, since many late 19th century slides showed figures in Elizabethan and other period costumes.

Q: The Knights of Pythias Library-Museum would like to hear from anyone who has magic lanterns or slides used in K of P fraternal initiations in the late 1800's. Many slides have Knights of Pythias on the title label; others have C.E. Ward Co., New London, Ohio. We would like to fill the gaps in our collection. None of our material is for sale, but we do sometimes swap duplicate items for those we need. Milton Wulfson, Acquisition Chairman, Box 321, Oceanside, New York, 11572.

A: Members please respond if you have K of P items. Our own (Wells) collection contains a most unusual Champion Sciopticon patented 1888 and distributed by the Pettibone Manufacturing Company of Cincinnati, which manufactured several types of lanterns expressly for lodge room work. The 4" round slides, permanently fixed in 16" revolving discs, were copyrighted in 1893 by W. L. Smith. They carry scenes from the lives of Damon and Pythias plus several scenes of a tropical region with peacocks, a mountain pass, mountains and sea, and a cavelike environment. We also have nearly 40 3 1/4 x 4" slides relating to the first and third ranks of the K of P. In addition to the descriptive paper labels, two of these have the Ward Co. identification and a third says "The Crescent Co., New London, Ohio." The oak slide box also contains several blue, red and yellow filters and small envelopes with extra slide labels. Two of these have the name W. L. Lunger on them. These items are not for sale, but we will be glad to show them to Mr. Wulfson any time he is in the Washington, D.C. area.

Q: I am trying to determine the date of my arc projector, made by Bausch & Lomb Company of Rochester, New York. It has interchangeable fittings for carbon rods and incandescent light. In addition I have boxes of undated glass slides made by the Keystone View Company. These have accompanying narratives. Can you provide information about the above items?
K.M. Belsky, 8505 Alicia Street, Philadelphia, PA. 19111.

A: The fact that your projector has fixtures for both carbon rods and incandescent light suggests that it dates from fairly early in the 20th century, although carbon arc projectors continued to be used to some

extent into the 1930's. Optic Projection by Simon Henry Gage and Henry Phelps Gage, Comstock Publishing Co. Ithaca, N.Y., 1914, contains photographs of many Bausch and Lomb carbon arc projectors. Perhaps you can locate yours there. Try your public and university libraries, the Academy of Natural Sciences, and the Franklin Institute. The Keystone View Company was founded in 1892 by B. L. Singley at Meadville, PA. Noted for the high quality of its photographs, Keystone became known both for its stereo views and its lantern slides and remained a leader in the field for several decades. Keystone also produced teachers' guides and narratives to accompany the sets of photographs developed for various grade levels. Your best clue to the date of the slides is the subject matter, especially if they include historical events, people in clothing of a particular era, etc.

Q: I am trying to find the value and a possible market for an antique projector I have (picture enclosed). Would appreciate any information you can give me. Michael G. Stelma, 612 Church Street, Swoyersville, PA 18704.

A: Your projector is a double-wick paraffin or kerosene-fueled, bellows-type lantern of a style used by lecturers in large auditoriums. It uses 4 x 7" mahogany-framed slides. The style, quality and type of fuel indicate it probably dates between 1870 and 1890. The lenses may be French, but the lantern itself may be American or English. The value, in today's market, is anyone's guess; dealers are asking ridiculous prices, as we pointed out in the last bulletin. If you wish to sell it yourself, you might check the "interests" given on the recent membership list of our Society and send photographs to those you think might be responsive. If you wish to sell through a dealer, you might pay a weekend visit to Renninger's, Black Angus and other huge multi-dealer antique markets in Adamstown, Pennsylvania and see who will give you a good price, or check with dealers in Scranton.

KOCH'S CORNER: THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

- I am pleased that some of our members have been meeting with one another and corresponding. We will be sending out a biography form soon, to be completed by members. This should help members locate others with similar interests. So will articles, personal experiences and questions you submit for the Bulletin. I hope more of you will send material to our editor, Leora Wood Wells, so we can all share our enjoyment with each other.

- We are still working on plans for the 1981 convention, but have no definite word for you as yet. Membership renewals seem to be slow coming in. Your dues are the only means of supporting the cost of reproducing and mailing the Bulletin, which is expensive, and we cannot carry members for free. Any who have not responded to renewal notices by March 1 will be dropped--with regret--from the rolls.

- I have received only one request for the "readings"--narratives to accompany sets of slides--which I obtained from the British ML Society. I'll be glad to send a list of the readings to anyone who sends $1 to cover copying costs and postage.

- We are trying to develop a bibliography of articles on magic lanterns that have appeared in national publication, such as the Antiquarian Journal; American Heritage, June 1959; Down East Magazine, June 1977; and Spinning Wheel Magazine, December 1978 and Jan-Feb. 1980. Please let us know about any you see.

NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE: THE EDITOR'S SCRAPBOX

- One of the highlights of our Christmas holiday was a magic lantern shown presented by member Dick Balzer of Washington, D.C. Since his audience ranged in age from infancy to senior citizens, Dick offered a pot pourri of motion and still slides, including fairytale slides that pleased the adults at least as much as the children. The invitation was choice, too--an oversized postcard bearing a charming view of 1880's children entertaining themselves and each other with a lantern show. We reciprocated the following week by hauling out, for the benefit of Dick and his family, the Christmas show we put together in 1962.

- Next time any of you are in the Black Angus multi-dealer antique market in Adamstown, Pennsylvania, take time to find fellow members Henry and Jane Schlosser, who collect and sell antique toys and magic lanterns. The Schlossers also have a shop in Strasburg, Pennsylvania.

- Two favorite scientists of mine recently sent me reprints of the July 3, 1880 issue of Volume I, no. 1 of Science, a Weekly Record of Scientific Progress. Conspicuously located on the first page is a McAllister ad for "Magic Lanterns and Stereopticons." McAllister, manufacturing opticians of 49 Nassau Street, New York, were leading distributors of lantern slides, stereoscope slides and other goodies.

- This month's vote for the most ridiculous item seen goes to a dealer we encountered in New York City last week. He had a wooden magic lantern box--empty and devoid of everything but its label--priced at $85.

- Bob Bishop reports publication of a new book, To Catch a Sunbeam, written by G.A. Household and L.M.H. Smith, Secretary of the Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain. The book deals with the "social problem" magic lantern shows that stunned and fascinated 19th century audiences with their vivid depictions of the devastating effects of drink and the smoldering evils of the slums. For information on purchase, write Mike Smith at 'Newlynn', Nether Lane, Nutley, East Sussex, England.

- Bob also pleads for more exchange of letters among members--an essential tie, he feels, especially at this early stage before most of us have been able to get acquainted face to face through Society meetings. We heartily second this idea and urge you, in addition, to share interesting bits of news through the Bulletin.

- A friend and former student of mine sent me a fine United Press International write-up on Anita and Doug Lear, who travel around England giving magic lantern shows in a tiny theatre on their floating canal boat home. Former teachers, the Lears adopted their itinerant way of life in 1977 and hope to make it a permanent career. The article appeared in the Minneapolis Tribune May 13, 1979.

- Roger Orme, another British lanternist, tells me his next American tour starts October 1980. He'll be addressing the Victorian Society of America in Wilmington, Delaware, late in October and will be appearing in other East Coast cities. We'll try to let you know his itinerary if he sends us the information in time.

- Note to budding magic lantern scholars: Some years ago (1963, to be exact!) in the Library of Congress, I ran across a tantalizing book, Die Nurnberg-Further Metallspielwarenindustrie in geschichtlicher und sozialpolitisher Beleuchtung by Karl Rosenhaupt, 1907. Since I do not read German, I got just far enough to figure out that the subject was the metal toy industry of Nuremberg and that the book discusses, among other things, the 17th century manufacture of "optical art and picture lanterns." If any of you read German and have a few spare days to spend in the LC Annex, the call number is HD9999.T7G47--and I'd still like to know what the book says!